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RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 5410
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [AU](#) [SF](#) [CN](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA SUPPORTS FINAL PEACE EFFORT IN COMOROS

REF: A. MARQUARDT EMAIL OF 3/13/08

[1](#)B. ANTAN 200 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) South Africa is involved in "one final effort" to resolve the Anjouan issue peacefully, according to Department of Foreign Affairs Chief Director Graham Maitland. Maitland confirmed to PolOff March 14 that South Africa had received a letter from Anjouan's Colonel Bacar promising to hold elections by May (ref A). Maitland, calling from Paris, said he could not get into details about the latest talks on the phone, but noted that President Mbeki was in touch with Tanzanian President Kikwete on the initiative. Neither Maitland nor his Deputy Rothkegel had copies of the Bacar letter.

[1](#)2. (C) A Pretoria-based French diplomat said that the French Ambassador to South Africa had spoken with Advocate Mojanku Gumbi, one of Mbeki's closest advisors. Gumbi reiterated what President Mbeki said publicly in Mauritius March 12 -- that South Africa will not endorse an AU military operation in Comoros. She insisted that ForMin Dlamini-Zuma's peace efforts were not dead and that dialogue was still possible. South Africa views Bacar's note to Dlamini-Zuma as a "positive sign." Gumbi also mentioned the operational problems with the planned AU military action, including the lack of an exit strategy.

[1](#)3. (C) The French Ambassador raised with Gumbi the idea of a compromise: Bacar would allow the AU troops to deploy to the harbor and airport now as a sign of "good will;" these troops would then form the core of the AU group that would oversee the May elections. Gumbi seemed initially skeptical, but reportedly warmed to the idea. According to the French Embassy, ForMin Dlamini-Zuma had been trying to call ForMin Kouchner, but as of the morning of 13 March, they had not made contact.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: While we cannot comment on Bacar's sincerity or on a letter we have not seen, we note that South Africa is particularly susceptible to last-ditch pleas for peace talks. South Africa believes that every problem can be solved through negotiations, drawing on their own peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy. Just as Zimbabwe's Mugabe and Cote d'Ivoire's Gbagbo outplayed Mbeki through endless rounds of negotiations, Bacar may be seeking to do

the same. END COMMENT.
BOST